

1506/223
A
SHORT ACCOUNT

**OF THE
INSTITUTION, RULES,**

**AND
PROCEEDINGS**

CORK SOCIETY,

FOR THE
RELIEF AND DISCHARGE

**OF
PERSONS CONFINED**

**FOR
SMALL DEBTS.**

C O R K :

Printed by **WILLIAM FLYN**, near the
Exchange, 1774.



*Al! little think the gay licentious proud,
Whom pleasure, pow'r, and affluence surround,
Al! little think they, while they dance along
How many pine in want, and dungeon-glooms,
Shut from the common air, and common use
Of their own limbs—*

THOMSON.

A
SHORT ACCOUNT, &c.

O LET THE SORROWFUL SIGHING OF
THE PRISONERS COME BEFORE THEE!

Pfal. 79, Ver. 12.

✱✱✱✱✱ I ✱✱✱✱✱ T has long been the wish of every humane mind that the security of commercial intercourse could be preserved without the cruel expedient of imprisonment for debt. Many able writers of our own nation have warmly contended for such a possibility, and have urged very plausible arguments in support of their opinion. Whether so desirable a reformation be practicable or not, I shall not set about to enquire. Even though it were, the difficulties would be too embarrassing, and the prejudices against it too strong, to allow us the hope of seeing it accomplished. Humanity has however a resource of which the law cannot deprive it. Though it cannot repeal the severity of the institution

A

stitution, it can mitigate the effects, and extend to wretched individuals that relief which the rigour of a general penalty denies them. And surely, in all the regions of distress, the heart that feels for it's fellow beings cannot find an object more worthy of it's attention. A singular species of misery, which, after loading the sufferer with every accumulated evil, hides him from the eye of pity, and shuts him from the opportunities of relief.

"I am afraid," says that excellent moralist, *Johnson*, "That those who are best acquainted with the state of our prisons, will confess that my conjecture is too near the truth, when I suppose that the corrosion of resentment, the heaviness of sorrow, the corruption of confined air, the want of exercise, and sometimes of food, the contagion of diseases from which there is no retreat, and the severity of tyrants against whom there can be no resistance, with all the complicated horrors of a prison, put an end every year to the life of one in four of those that are shut up from the common comforts of human life.

"Thus perish yearly some thousands, overborne with sorrow, consumed by famine, or putrified by filth; many of them in the most vigorous and useful part of life; for the thoughtless and imprudent are commonly young, and the active and busy are seldom old.

"The misery of goals," continues he, "is not half their evil; they are filled with every corruption which poverty and wickedness can generate between them; with all the shameless and profligate enormities that can be produced by the impudence



“pudence of ignominy, the rage of want, and the
 “malignity of despair. In a prison the awe of the
 “publick eye is lost, and the power of the law is
 “spent; there are few fears, there are no blushes.
 “The lewd inflame the lewd, the audacious harden
 “the audacious, Every one fortifies himself as he
 “can against his own sensibility, endeavours to
 “practise on others the arts which are practised on
 “himself, and gains the kindness of his associates
 “by a similitude of manners.”

In this horrid situation there are numbers at this
 moment among ourselves. Many a poor man, whom
 imprudence or ill-fortune has brought to those recep-
 tacles of misery, from his own little dwelling, where
 he had lived with innocence, tho’ in poverty, be-
 comes in a very short time corrupted by that conta-
 gious profligacy, which may be strictly called **THE**
GOAL DISTEMPER, and loses every good qua-
 lity that makes him of any value either to his family
 or to society. To redeem such wretches is there-
 fore to save soul as well as body from the danger of
 destruction.

In a country like ours, remarkable for hospitality
 to strangers and sociability among ourselves, it was
 imagined, that a regular association would be chear-
 fully supported for the purpose of restoring our poor
 unfortunate fellow-creatures to light and life, to
 their stations in society, to their starving wives and
 children, and enabling them to resume their several
 trades and occupations, in which their industry and
 caution must be redoubled by their sad experience.
 The result has proved that benevolence was far
 from being extinct among us, and that it wanted
 only to be excited by authenticated representations
 of distress, and encouraged by some regulations to
 guard it from abuse.

On

On this idea, the out-lines of a scheme were laid down, by some Gentlemen, who met on the 16th of June last, at the Council Chamber, and formed themselves into a Society, the Rules of which are herein given at large, taken, with some variations, from those which have been adopted in LONDON, BRISTOL, and other principal cities in ENGLAND.

It is hoped that these Rules will shew a degree of accuracy and caution in their construction, which in the hands of a set of intelligent men must effectually preclude all possibility of imposition. The management of business is to be reposed in a Committee. These are to meet every second Wednesday, to receive applications, which must be by petition in writing, minutely setting forth all the circumstances of the prisoner's case, and referring to some person of undoubted character in the city or county for a character of him. This inquiry is then to be made the business of the Secretary, who is to apply to such persons accordingly, and lay the result before the Committee at their next meeting. Every other member will also undoubtedly communicate all that may come to his knowledge relative to the merits of such applications, so that the Committee will have the fullest possible information before them, and be enabled to proceed on the surest ground. If the petitioner appears clearly to be an object of regard, they will set about effecting his discharge. If they have any doubt remaining as to his character, they leave him to his fate, and turn their benevolence to some other more worthy of their favour.

It is hard to conceive a scheme of charity better guarded against abuse. Charity is in general bestowed

bestowed from some sudden impulse arising from the object itself, or from the representation of another, in either of which cases benevolence may be easily deceived. But here it is to be deliberately dispensed on cool consideration and minute inquiry, and, therefore, as far as human sagacity can possibly go, every scheme of deceit must be frustrated. To make their precautions more compleat, by their 7th Rule, every person is debarred (except the case be very extraordinary) from their relief a second time. By the 8th the Prisoner is for ever rejected from their notice if they detect him in the smallest article of prevarication, as he is also by the 12th if they have reason EVEN TO SUSPECT that he has designedly incurred the Debt with a view of being discharged by their humanity.

The Committee acknowledge with gratitude the chearful assistance which they have received, tho' they have chosen to decline the usual urgency of personal application until their conduct had gone through some degree of probation, and entitled them to call with confidence on the public for their assistance to a scheme of so new a nature among us. But for this, their funds would have been more ample than they are ; yet, when the recency of their institution, and the caution necessary to their proceedings, are taken into account, they imagine that the annexed list of the persons whom they have already relieved, will not appear inconsiderable.

Besides the redemption of wretched individuals, another valuable and happy effect has sprung collaterally from their plan of conduct. To direct them in their choice of proper objects, they have rigorously scrutinized the behaviour of the persons during their confinement, as well as their characters before,
and

and have to this purpose examined the Keepers of the Gaols, on their voluntary oaths, determined to reject every application not supported by the proper demeanor of the petitioner. To guard against this, and recommend themselves to the notice of the Society, an emulation has in consequence arisen in both prisons, and regularity, decency, and chearful hope have taken place of riot, profligacy, and despair.

Animated by the favour with which the scheme has been received, the Committee now beg leave to call upon the public for their assistance toward it's compleat establishment. The task of visiting the mansions of distress, of soliciting the clemency of creditors, and dispensing the fund with oeconomy, however painful and laborious, they chearfully take upon themselves. They only ask to have their hands strengthened, and their powers enlarged, to which purpose, they doubt not, every feeling member of the community will chearfully contribute, and lend his aid to the common cause of HUMANITY.

The COMMITTEE for this Year are :

Mr. SHERIFF CARLETON,
Rev. DOCTOR PIGOTT,
HENRY SHEARES, Esq;
FRANCIS GRAY, Esq;
GREATRAKES SMYTH, Esq;
DAVID ROCHFORT, Esq;
Mr. CHRISTOPHER ALLEN.

The Rev. Doctor PIGOTT, is Secretary, and Mr. SHEARES, Treasurer.

Subscriptions to be received by any Member of the Committee.

The RULES

T H E R U L E S.

1. **T**HAT this Institution be called, **THE CORK SOCIETY FOR THE RELIEF AND DISCHARGE OF PERSONS CONFINED FOR SMALL DEBTS.**

2. That every person who annually subscribes one Guinea or more, shall be a Member of this Society. (The subscriptions to be paid at the time of subscribing;) but that contributions of any smaller sum shall be thankfully accepted.

3. That the Subscribers meet annually on the first Wednesday in June (of which notice shall be given in the News-Papers) to elect a Committee and Officers for managing the affairs of the Society and for examining the accounts of the preceding year.

4. That the Committee meet every second Wednesday at the Council-Chamber, at Twelve o'Clock at Noon, at which time and place *only* Petitions shall be received, which shall be referred to the Secretary for examination and enquiry, and he shall report the result to the next Committee to be taken by them into consideration.

5. That the Committee shall consist of seven, any three of whom shall be a quorum, and that all Members of the Society who chuse to attend shall have voices.

6. That every Petitioner must lay his case fairly written before the Committee, and minutely set forth all the particulars thereof, and shall refer the Committee to some person or persons of character for an account of the Petitioner's integrity and behaviour.

B

7. That

7. That no person shall be discharged a second time by the Society unless some very extraordinary circumstances shall appear in his favour.

8. That any attempt of the Petitioner to impose on the Society in the smallest instance shall for ever preclude him from their notice.

9. That no composition for any debt shall exceed *Ten* pounds.

10. That no Attorney's bill for business done against the Debtor shall at any time be paid or compounded for by the Society.

11. That the Treasurer shall not make any payments but by order of the Committee at their usual meeting.

12. That if this Society shall have reason *EVEN* *TO SUSPECT* that any Petitioner has designedly involved himself in debt from a hope of being relieved by this Society such person shall *FOR EVER* be precluded from their relief.

13. That *County* and *City* Debtors shall be *equally* the objects of the consideration of this Society.

The Plan of this Society was first formed on the 16th of June last, but they did not proceed on any business until the 13th of July, since which they have relieved and discharged the following persons.

Prisoners.	Creditors.	Debts.	Comp.
		l. s. d.	l. s. d.
Wm. Casey, City-gaol, a shoemaker, with two children.	Thomas Wilson,	7 4 0	3 8 3
Thos. Connor ditto, a boatman, 70 years old.	Robert Morris,	1 17 11	1 0 0
Malachy Crowley, do. cellar-cutter, a wife and 4 children.	Widow Harrogon	1 18 5	1 0 0
Dennis Murphy, Co. Gaol, a dairy-man, a wife and 3 children.	Timothy Delany	9 9 0	2 5 6
Charles Graham, city gaol. A joiner, the only support of an old father, struck with a palsy on one side by means of his confinement.	Owen Lynch,	6 0 0	3 8 3
Ditto. - - -	Christ. Hospital,	7 6 4	2 5 6
Dennis Neal, co. gaol. A farmer, a wife and 8 children.	Miss Carey,	84 0 0	5 0 0
Peter Lombard, city gaol, a wife and 5 children.	Mary Hickcock,	8 0 0	2 0 0

Jeremy

	Creditors.	Debts.	Comp.
		l. s. d.	l. s. d.
Jeremy Fowlue, do. The support of a mother, brother and sister.	The Miss Smiths	21 15 0	3 8 3

Ditto. - - - Nat. Warner, 13 0 0 | 1 14 1h

George Walsh, city gaol. A wife and 1 child.	Mr. Art. Connel	13 0 0	gratis.
--	-----------------	--------	---------

Michl. Dowdy, county gaol. A labourer, wife and 6 children.	Laur. Deneen,	1 3 0	1 3 0
---	---------------	-------	-------

John Baxter, city gaol.	Mrs. Pehrman,	3 8 3	1 14 1h
----------------------------	---------------	-------	---------

Ditto. - - - John Sullivan, 1 0 0 | gratis.

Ditto. - - - Jer. Coghlan, 2 16 6 | 0 16 3

Philip Sullivan, co. gaol, — Toomy, 2 5 6 | 1 0 0

Mumphy Leary, Mar- shallea.	Richd. Duan,	1 2 9	0 11 4h
--------------------------------	--------------	-------	---------

Dan. Sullivan, do.	Michl. Murphy,	1 2 9	0 11 5h
--------------------	----------------	-------	---------

Richd. Megin, do.	Wm. Creed,	1 10 8	0 8 1h
-------------------	------------	--------	--------

The COMMITTEE acknowledge gratefully, the generous behaviour of KINGSMILL BERRY and FRANCIS CARLETON, junr. Esquires, Sheriffs of the City, and Mr. PETER DEANE, Under-Sheriff of the County, in remitting their Fees, and most chearfully assisting them in the execution of their scheme; and they think it but justice to the Creditors to declare, that they have acted with the greatest humanity.

WE certify that since the Institution of the Cork Society for the Relief and Discharge of Persons confined for Small Debts, there has been a very great Reformation in the Prisons under our Care. The Prisoners are become much more regular and decent. They have, by common Consent, abolished the demand of what was usually called Cap-Money, and, in general, seem to endeavour by Sobriety and good Behaviour to recommend themselves to the notice of that Charitable Society. Cork, August 29, 1774.

FRANCIS MURPHY, } *Keeper of the
County Gaol.*

ARTHUR WARNER, } *Keeper of the
City Gaol.*

ON the most minute inquiry, I find that the behaviour of the Prisoners in both Gaols is extremely reformed since the Institution of the Society for the Relief of Debtors, and that they have strictly conformed to the Rules of Decency and Regularity, which, by order of the Committee, I have prescribed to them for their conduct. Cork, 29 Aug. 1774.

RICHARD PIGOTT, } *Secretary to the
Committee.*

F I N I S.

The Committee elected in 1775 being the next year were

Right Secretary

James Treasurers

Smyth

Blackfort

Large Jones Esq

Allen



Doctor Samuel B. Cornwell

Henry Jones died this year
was succeeded as Treasurer

by Mr. Smyth & Doctor Cooper
in Committee March

in the Year 1776 - were elected

Doctor Right Secretary

Great Smyth Treasurers

Blackfort

James, Allen, & Cornwell

and Cooper - were

and six more Gentlemen then

added to the Committee
namely Thomas Shuttle Esq.

Richard Hare Esq.

Richard Perry Esq.

Henry Warron Esq.

Doctor Pat. Blair

G. W. Pat. Comberford

Doctor Pigot was a most
part of this year in England
whereupon W. Rockford
was chosen Secretary during
his absence. —

1st Aug: 1778 W. Smyth
is said to have drowned himself
his Body was found in the
Channel opposite to his
house. Unhappy Man

His Prodigality turn'd him
Valiant turn'd the Society
whose Money to the Amount
of £700 Mr. Threlkeld
H. Mad. away with -

Soon after this Rochfort
Not liking how Matters were
Carried on Refused to Act
in the Committee -



7